HOME

Billionaires Melinda French Gates and MacKenzie Scott Invest $23 Million to Promote School-Based Health Centers

The billionaires' investments in the School-Based Health Alliance, the leading national nonprofit that promotes school-based health centers, will help open 100 new centers in underserved communities, which are then projected to achieve a $23.4 million annual net gain for which data is available.

By Brenda Baletti, Ph.D.

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Billionaires Melinda French Gates and MacKenzie Scott this month invested a total of $23 million in the School-Based Health Alliance, the leading national nonprofit that promotes the expansion of school-based health centers (SBHCs).

Gates' contribution ($15 million) made through her Pivotal Ventures company, will launch SBHC "innovation initiatives" in Washington, Illinois, Chicago and Miami. Scott's $8 million gift will help support general operations for the alliance.

The funding substantially increases the alliance's revenue, which was less than $4 million in 2022, the most recent year for which data is available. Before the new $23 million investment, most of the alliance's funding was from private donors.

Shin tweeted the grant announcement:

The organization's mission is to increase the number of SBHCs nationally among schools that receive federal funding through policy advocacy, technical support to existing centers and support securing funding for new and existing centers. There are approximately 2,800 SBHCs in the U.S.

SBHCs are intended to provide healthcare to kids by offering "primary care, mental healthcare, and other health services in schools," particularly in underserved communities.

This includes services "to prevent disease, disability, and other health conditions or their progression" such as "immunizations" and "screening for vision and hearing and other screening tests."

Promoting equity is also a key platform for Pivotal Ventures, which Gates founded in 2015 to "accelerate social progress in the United States by removing barriers that hold people back." It is a venture capital fund that primarily makes return-seeking investments rather than grants to philanthropic donations, but it has also made grants in the past.

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Shin tweeted the grant announcement:

> Arvind Ravi Kanth Athena @arvindathena
> $23 million awarded $23M from @pivotalventures and @mackenziescott. This fund will help to scale new coordination initiatives in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Miami, Seattle, Washington DC, and Wisconsin. We are grateful for the generosity! #SCHBHC
>
> Prominent philanthropists invest $23 Million in SBHA to advance health equity
>
> 12:17 AM · Jun 5, 2024 · 1.2K Views
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Philanthropic funding key to SBHC expansion for decades

SBHCs are typically full-service health clinics physically situated within school buildings, although a small percentage of them are mobile units or, increasingly, telehealth clinics.

The Association of American Pediatrics (AAP) began to establish the first SBHCs in the 1960s in Massachusetts, Texas and Minnesota. Since their inception, they have focused on providing services to low-income children who lack access to regular healthcare.

In the late 1980s, there were just a handful of SBHCs, but the concept started to "attain consistent" across the country. Their work focused on family planning, along with general youth health and wellness.

Early expansion of SBHCs focused on issues of reproductive healthcare and patient rights, but efforts to establish new SBHCs expanded rapidly in the 1990s.

The Adolescent Family Life Program, which was the first federal program dedicated to "urban communities" dealing with teen pregnancy, was the first organization to offer technical support and conduct periodic qualitative studies of existing SBHCs and their services. By 1998, the School-Based Health Alliance was founded to support SBHCs.

Federal investment 1,135 in 45 states by 1998-99, with the expansion largely funded through more than 1,000 grants from the federal government and private grants from state governments.

Medicaid expansion in the 1990s also helped to share funding for SBHCs through coverage to low-income patients, along with congressional funding earmarked for SBHCs beginning in 1995 through the Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities program, which ended by 2005.

After that, funding for SBHCs was available from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, qualified health centers, SBHCs also receive funding from local trusts and patient fees.

Through the Affordable Care Act in 2010, Congress appropriated $200 million over four years dedicated to the construction, renovation and expansion of SBHCs. The Government Accountability and Health Human Services (HHS) distributed that money to 1,125 awards across the country.

By 2017, there were at 2,417 SBHCs.

The Biden administration's HHS in 2021 awarded $6.45 million in grants to expand school-based health centers in 14 states. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 provided $1.4 billion for SBHCs, $5 million in grants to 125 SBHCs, in 2023. HHS awarded another $10 million to 77 health centers in 2024 to expand school-based health services.

Congressional Democrats in 2022 also passed the Nurturing Wellness Safety Opportunities for Children and Youth Act (NURSE) Corps Act to "ensure the provision of implementing, enhancing, or expanding the provision of" school-based mental health services, which is administered by the Children's Health Insurance Program.

The legislation changed the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' reimbursement rules according to Medicaid healthcare services — including behavioral health services — in schools, and reducing "barriers to enrollment" in Medicaid and CHIP.

The bill also funded the creation of telehealth SBHCs law, also given telehealth status in 2021 by HHS's Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that money to 125 awards across the country.

Concerns over parental rights remain central to the debate over SBHCs today. Tanguay said that SBHCs can provide adolescents with confidential health services without parental consent, based on "state laws and regulations, the family planning, mental health and substance abuse laws of the state if the parents were involved."

The critics means that parents are denied access to their children's health information due to confidentiality rules that list information on her doctors will providers including mental health and other interested parties on the same basis.

"It's a very slippery slope that appears to eliminate barriers to sharing a student's private health information, rather than preventing them," she said.

While the family has of SBHCs was on family planning and reproductive health, today the literature focuses more on their potential "to address lagging immunization rates" and to provide mental health services to children and teens during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Groups like the AAP, a strong supporter of SBHCs, have used the mental health crisis to call on the Biden administration to "dramatically increase" the number of SBHCs to help "millions more children, arguing access to "school-based mental health care" should be a priority.

The administration responded with new policy measures, including the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act in which made $1 billion available for mental health services, and the American Rescue Plan Act. Both offer funding explicitly for school-based mental health services for students, HHS has been requiring.

Many of these measures have funded the expansion of SBHCs.

Pivotal Ventures Senior Manager of the Adolescent Mental Health Initiative Sara Bodnar indicated that the organization's investments will help to "scale new coordination initiatives" in eight cities.

"School-based Health Alliance's unique approach extends mental health resources for youth and families within existing systems of care, making it easier to access trusted, culturally responsive support. We are proud to partner with them in this important effort in these communities and look forward to seeing their impact," she said.

"Mental health is clearly a significant focus of these centers," Johnson said. "But Parents should be very concerned about how these centers are funded and who is behind them."

Johnson gave the example of a case in Maine where a federally funded school-based health center provided transgender hormone treatments to a minor without the knowledge or consent of parents. He planned to investigate or a center.

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Pharma vs. persons in the SBHC school

The School-Based Health Alliance said the "national center for school-based healthcare," it consults for organizations seeking to start SBHCs — helping them secure funding, provide technical support and even providing design funding. It also tracks and lobbies for SBHC-friendly policies on the local, state and federal levels.

In addition to Gates and Scott, SBHA funders include Merck, maker of the Gardasil human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, and Walgreens, which has partnered with SBHCs along with a CVS Health program to increase vaccinations through child wellness visits.

Whitney Shrik with Based Corporation also is a funder. Previous funders include Gilead and insurance giants Kaiser Permanente and Aetna.

The alliance's board members also have ties to major healthcare conglomerates, and their resumes often highlight their success in vaccinating low-income people of color against COVID-19.

Board member Mark Weinreb is CEO of the Illinois Weitzman Health System, formerly Community Health, a Centene subsidiary, which boasts of having administered over 568,000 COVID-19 vaccines and winning "universal acclaim for its pandemic response."

Another board member, Dr. Gillian Barclay, is the vice president of Global Public Health & Scientific Affairs at Big Pharma's Colgate Palmolive, and previously worked at the Kellogg Foundation and World Health Organization.

Board member Cecilia Chegwin works at healthcare giant Kaiser Permanente, where she is an advocate for universal healthcare and where Baylor University got private telehealth access.

Robert Boyle, also a board president and CEO, has been instrumental in getting federal legislation passed to fund SBHCs, including the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. He has been a persons to advocate for laws that limit the information parents have access to and make SBHCs be regulated and offer protections for parents and children.

To New Hampshire, for instance, a proposed bill regarding the establishment of SBHCs includes a provision that would require parents to be present when services are provided," she said.

"Parents should be very concerned about how these centers are funded and who is behind them. And about that child's mental history and any personal information that is collected and can be shared [even by an outside] network."

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Brenda Baletti Ph.D. is a reporter for The Defender. She wrote and taught about capitalism and politics for 15 years at the university level before pursuing journalism full time. She has a doctorate in political science from Drew University in New Jersey.

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government unions?
What do you think America, you want to save your kids or keep skating on thin ice?
Do not look to legacy media, big tech reduced them to rubble and corporate rushed in for the spoils controlled by government. They cannot risk coming clean, they do not have the moral clarity or fortitude to get past their own malfeasance. They prefer Hunters defense, plausible deniability, plus it sounds cool, it's a university Boomer offspring thing, surpassing their Boomer parents hubris post WWII with snarky internet comments.

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Elwood Bernat
17 days ago edited

If you think the minions in suits, especially "caring" childless corporate women working for the metastasized cancer of American and global big Pharma would not kill your children to make money, deluding themselves of responsibility with their conglomerate collaborators, that have used CCP mentality of totalitarianism for the past three decades when the Democrats made China "besties" to mechanize genocide, you're just voluntary stupid. Or am I just being obtuse and misogynistic?
Funny how everything they intend to use to mechanize future plans, like driving women away from childbirth with demoralization by abortion but maintaining the veneer of being "caring persons" was first grounded years before laying the foundation of misogyny as a negative charge.
I know you want to be good faithful loving people, morally and ethnically beyond reproach, so do it, save your children, stop deluding yourself with your "wants" and think critically about how you were set up to be a serf. You are already being replaced with 12 million illegals that will quickly be 50 million anchor babies with Compulsory Socialized "healthcare". You are nearly useless. They want your children in limited numbers and they want them to be all one color, thinking one way as AI intends to stabilize the market.

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CrystalClaire
18 days ago

Why don't they just call them Jab & Junk Chop Centers for Junior? But wait - I thought school gymnasiums were meant for housing millions of unvaxxed illegals, who are all fully intact, fighting age males? So the plan must be.....if your kid drops dead from all their monkeying around, you can always adopt a migrant!!😃

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Douglas Jack
18 days ago

Brenda Baletti, Thank you for enunciating these Oligarch health & learning attacks on vulnerable youth, left defenceless by adults who have submitted to false authorities & their falsehoods. School nurses serving many 100s & even 1000s of students do not know the youth as a whole person. Teachers have fallen into the trap of feeding into deficit concepts or learning rather than fostering Strengths, which within one on thirty students is impossible to achieve.
The FALSE FOUNDATIONS of School-Based-Health-Centers SBHC.
1) To begin with our western Oligarch controlled mandated system of FALSE 'EDUCATION' (Latin 'educare' = 'to-lead-forth-from-within', not to indoctrinate from without') violates the very principles & practice of each individual's choices in voluntary autonomous learning.
During all humanity's worldwide 'indigenous' (L. 'self-generating') heritage, all youth & ages were supported in realization of their personal VISION-QUEST for their unique gifts or services for 'community' (L. 'com' = 'together' + 'munus' = 'gift-or-service'). https://sites.google.com/si...
Many in our society do not follow school-room-box indoctrination of regurgitated learning, but prefer to contribute with mentors, who are hungry for the brilliance & assistance of youth. Young people who blindly submit to false education accreditation, then fall into the authority trap of endless student debt, really for fragmented memorization of inane material, which only valorizes teachers sidelined from real life. Our false system of 'education' is deeply dysfunctional & counter-productive. We need young people who can recognize, identify with & align their brilliance with their elder mentors in the real Domestic, Industrial & Commercial functions of life. One

see more

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BarbaraCharis → Douglas Jack
18 days ago

Home schooling should be the norm. Some mothers say they need to work, but should find a stay at home mother and barter in exchange for teaching their child(ren). The school system today is an indoctrination center and is not educating them. Children are graduating highchool with the inability to even spell. I thought one of my children was in a top school district... She can't spell...Her math ability got her into the University of California at Berkeley; where she graduated. We did not want her to go there, but my husband gave in. ..

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jann → BarbaraCharis
17 days ago

I agree in home schooling today but it has to be planned for. That means living somewhere with low taxes, the land to grow your own food and home economic skills. Those skills, including carpentry, cooking and sewing, haven't been taught in decades. Unfortunately, parents have been thrown into this situation today without those resources.

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BarbaraCharis → jann
17 days ago

Agreed with what you have written. Unfortunately, it took awhile for me to awaken, too. My children went to public school, but it was not too bad in the sixties. My older daughter and I left California in 2019, because it was unaffordable to live there. We found an affordable home in another state. My daughter tried her hand at farming, but the only thing she produced were nightshades...which are toxic. Now, she is working on spinach; planting indoors until there is no danger of frost. We also planted 11 fruit trees...and last summer were unprepared for the massive harvest from two peach trees. Two of our four fig trees produced some figs. This year she has canning equipment ready. Last Fall she bought 6 baby chicks...now they are full grown hens. Within a couple more weeks...they will start laying. It is important to think about becoming self-sufficient, because there could be a very bumpy road ahead.

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jann → BarbaraCharis
17 days ago

Good for you! Those fruit trees sound like a dream.

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Douglas Jack → BarbaraCharis
18 days ago

Barbara Charis, Yes home schooling as my own 3 children but also every other dimension of the collective domestic economy. There is a loving tendency of women to take more responsibility within the home, but let's support female (& male organization) of the most important collective domestic sector & other female brilliance in every discipline & field. Men should be standing up to support our women (& men) in this most critical of intimate economies. By supporting this strong mostly female tendency to collective domestic organization. 70% of population live in Multihomes (apartment, townhouse & village) & 20% of Multihome-Dwellers are extended families, which are already the largest Service provider at some 2 trillion $$ per year contributing to the North American population. Through accounting recognition & organization in this overlooked essential, each of us can rebuild economy, medicine & education as it should be.
SUPPORTING HOME-SCHOOLING
Why in our Oligarch commanded 'exogenous' (Latin 'other-generated') world is the collective domestic (mostly female) core economy, not recognized. The Domestic including Home-community education should be the first labour & intelligence (capital from Latin 'cap' = 'head' = 'collective-intelligence') which we account for, celebrate & empower in our collective decision-making. Such honouring of the domestic economy as core, was universal in all human 'indigenous' (L. 'self-generating') ancestry & 1st Nations here. Humanity's worldwide time-based equivalency accounting upon the String-shell (eg. Wampum on Turtle-Island, Quipu in S. America & Cowrie in indigenous Celtic-Slavic Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia & all islands) once empowered all people inclusively as true 'money' (Greek 'mnemosis' = 'memory'. Participatory accounting within present day Participatory Corporations is a legacy of our common heritage. https://sites.google.com/si...

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